

March 10, 2025

The Board of the West Park Civic Association (“WPCA”) opposes pending Bill No. 16-2025 in which City Council would redefine a Community Center.

WPCA’s understanding is that Bill No. 16-2025 has been drafted based upon the request of Ripple Community Inc. (“Ripple”) to overturn the decision of Allentown Zoning Board and subsequent appeal decision by the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas regarding Ripple’s use of Emmanuel Church as a drop-in center serving the needs of Lehigh Valley’s homeless population interpreted by Ripple as a Community Center.

Since the founding of WPCA in 1976, members and other neighborhood residents have invested time and improvements to preserve Allentown’s only downtown majority homeowner neighborhood with West Park at its heart. The community and WPCA are amenable to Emmanuel Church transforming into below market rate apartments and housing Ripple’s offices. However, residents of the West Park neighborhood, and in particular residents who reside in close proximity to Emmanuel Church, are opposed to any zoning variance to allow Ripple a drop-in facility at the Emmanuel Church, citing the negative impact on the community provided by well-documented evidence, presented to both the Zoning Board and the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas. Both agencies ruled against Ripple’s variance requests.

For City Council to propose a change in a zoning definition to permit the proposed variance is at odds with good governance, especially troubling while the city is in the process of updating its zoning regulations.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of the West Park Civic Association

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